

Issue #4

PBRN Week in Review | February 13, 2009



***PBRN Grantees:** Please circulate relevant information to your network members. For additional information and suggestions for future items, please contact Elaine Wootten, woottenelaine@uams.edu or 501-526-6628.*

Notable Activities this Week

- The monthly PBRN conference call held this week featured discussion of the process being used by the North Carolina PBRN to identify research interests and potential research topics among key stakeholders of the network. This process has included focus groups involving more than 75 public health practitioners, content analysis of identified research themes and issues, and discussions with university faculty to identify common areas of interest. North Carolina anticipates being able to share the resulting research agenda with other PBRNs once the process is complete.
- North Carolina and several other PBRN grantees have developed or are considering written charters and similar guidance documents for their networks. As these documents are developed, networks may wish to share these with other PBRNs to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information. A password-protected page on the PBRN website is being developed for this purpose. Thanks to North Carolina for distributing its charter this week.
- A brief ***PBRN Technical Assistance Survey*** has been developed to identify information needs and areas of expertise that PBRNs would like to access during their initial phases of network development. This informational survey is designed for network leaders to complete on behalf of their network members, thereby allowing leaders to assess current capacities and needs within their network membership as a whole. Some networks may choose to disseminate the survey directly to key members of their network for completion. The survey may be completed online via a web page link that has been emailed to key contacts at each PBRN grantee. This link can be forwarded to other PBRN network members as desired, and multiple responses from the same network can be submitted if desired. Questions or suggestions regarding the survey are welcome and can be directed to Sharla Smith, smithsharla@uams.edu or 501-526-6629. We ask that grantees submit their responses to the survey by **Friday February 27** so that responses can be summarized and disseminated back to PBRN grantees for discussion and TA planning.
- A draft document outlining ***Initial Research and Evaluation Concepts*** for the Public Health PBRN Initiative was developed and shared at the PBRN monthly conference call. This document describes a set of research and evaluation questions that are





expected to be important to examine over the short term (1-3 years) and longer-term (3-5 years) time horizon for the initiative. We hope this document will stimulate further thought and discussion among PBRN grantees and participants regarding what questions we want to be able to answer through the course of work on this initiative. Of particular importance, we anticipate that this document will help identify baseline information that needs to be collected from public health PBRNs early in their development (e.g. first 6 months) so that changes and progress over time can be tracked. We ask that PBRN grantees review this draft concept document and submit any questions, ideas, or concerns to the Coordinating Center by March 6 so that a broad discussion of these concepts can be conducted during the March conference call.

New in the Journals

- The March 2009 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* contains a mini-symposium on public health systems and services research that may be of considerable interest to PBRN members. A paper by Doug Scutchfield and colleagues (University of Kentucky) reviews the literature on performance measurement in public health. Another paper by Glen Mays and colleagues (University of Arkansas) critically reviews theory and evidence regarding the organization and financing of public health delivery systems. Finally, a paper by Alice Ammerman and colleagues (UNC-Chapel Hill) examines the role of economics in public health delivery.

New on the Website www.publichealthsystems.org/pbrn

- PBRN Technical Assistance Survey
- PBRN Research and Evaluation Concept Document

Activities on the Horizon

- The first quarterly PBRN Webinar will be held February 19, 9:30-11:00am EST. All PBRN participants and partners are invited to participate in this event. The toll-free telephone conference line has been emailed to PBRN grantees, and the website for viewing slide presentations will be emailed shortly.
- The agenda for the first PBRN in-person meeting on Tuesday April 7 (Lexington, KY) is actively under development. We invite your ideas regarding specific agenda items or more general topical areas to be covered during the meeting. Please send your ideas and interests to Sharla Smith, smithsharlaa@uams.edu or 501-526-6629. This meeting will be an opportunity for in-depth discussions of the strategies that grantees are using to develop their network, prioritize research interests, and plan

initial research activities. Members of the PBRN National Advisory Committee will also be on hand for the discussions.

Key Upcoming Dates

February 13, 10am PST – Panel session on public health systems research at *Preventive Medicine 2009 Meeting*, Los Angeles CA. Speakers include PBRN Advisory Group member Dr. Michael Caldwell along with Dr. Hugh Tilson and Glen Mays.

February 16 – Deadline for abstract submissions for presentation at the *AcademyHealth Public Health Systems Research Interest Group Meeting*.
<http://www.academyhealth.org/interestgroups/phsr/callforpapers.htm>

February 16-20 – Deadline for abstract submissions for APHA Annual Meeting

February 19, 9:30-11:00am EST – *PBRN Webinar on Public Health Systems Research*. Glen Mays, Doug Scutchfield, and Tim Van Wave will give a brief overview of PHSR, what we've learned to date, common methods and approaches, and new directions. This webinar is designed for all PBRN investigators, staff, and interested network partners. Connection information will be sent via separate email.

March 10 – Monthly PBRN conference call, 11:30 EST, 10:30 CST, 9:30 MST, 8:30 PST.

March 13 - Deadline for registration for the *Keeneland Conference on Public Health Systems Research*. www.publichealthsystems.org/media/file/2009KCRegistrationFormPDF.pdf

Funding Opportunities for Public Health Systems Research

- RWJF is developing a new program focus area on public health law that is likely to open new opportunities for research on the design, implementation, and impact of public health law and policy. We will keep you apprised of funding opportunities.
- RWJF has a newly active program to support research that evaluates the use and impact of quality improvement techniques in public health practice. The deadline for the first round of funding closed in December 2008 but we will keep you apprised of subsequent funding opportunities.
<http://www.rwjf.org/applications/solicited/cfp.jsp?ID=20581>
- A new program announcement from the National Institutes of Health looks particularly well suited for practice-based research in public health. *Using Systems Science Methodologies to Protect and Improve Population Health (R21)*. This FOA solicits Exploratory/Developmental (R21) applications from institutions/organizations that propose to apply one or more specific system science methodologies to “policy

resistant” public health problems and contribute knowledge that will enhance effective decision making around the development of and prioritization of policies, interventions, and programs to improve population health in the U.S. and abroad, especially where resources are limited and only a limited number of programs/policies/interventions can be implemented. Standard NIH submission deadlines apply. <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-224.html>

PBRN Coordinating Center

The PBRN Coordinating Center welcomes the newest member of our team, Sylvia Porchia, a predoctoral fellow who will be working with the PBRN Initiative. Sylvia is a 2nd year student in the DrPH program at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

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